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ABSTRACT

In an effort to combine instruction in study and reading strategies with the study of an academic course, an adjunct course was created by the learning skills center at a major university. The five objectives of the program were: to improve students' studying strategies, to encourage application of strategies to similar courses, to increase students' knowledge of themselves as students, to provide a group study experience, and to increase students' understanding of study strategies. A pilot group of 25 students participated in the 13 week course with 46 students serving as a control group. In the beginning sessions of the course, the students attempted to identify the key concepts of the academic course, with particular emphasis placed on the procedure of analyzing an essay examination question. General study techniques were stressed in the next phase, and in the concluding sessions students prepared for the final examination. The use of a post-course questionnaire and a comparison of final grades with those of the control group indicated that the adjunct course objectives were all achieved. (FL)

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# A REPORT ON AN ADJUNCT COURSE DESIGNED TO INTEGRATE READING AND STUDY SKILLS WITH A UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC CLASS

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C SOOK 334

## Introduction

This report presents an initial effort of the Learning Skills Center at UCLA to offer an Adjunct Course combining instruction in study and reading strategies with the study of an academic course. Offered in addition to and separate from the usual lecture and discussion sections of the class, the program focused on the learning process. It gave students an extended opportunity to apply study strategies to their own material.

This program was aimed at students who wished to develop skills that would enable them to study successfully for a history course, specifically, and for social science courses, generally.

The goals for the program were the following:

1. To improve students' study strategies using a history course as a medium
2. To encourage application of strategies to other social science courses
3. To increase students' knowledge of themselves as students
4. To provide a group study experience in which all students share a common course
5. To increase students' understanding of study strategies

These five objectives were achieved. In addition, the program led the history department to establish an experimental discussion section that combined study strategies with content in

an upper division course.

Description of the Program

To achieve the goals a no-credit, no-grade Adjunct Course was offered concurrently with a lower division history course, Latin America: Reform and Revolution. This class was selected for several reasons. (1) Both the course and the professor, Dr. E. Bradford Burns, had received high student evaluation. (2) Dr. Burns had referred students to the Center and was receptive to the Adjunct Course. (3) This course attracted not only a wide range of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and a scattering of seniors, but a substantial number of minority students, particularly those of Hispanic background.

The students of the Adjunct Course were divided into two groups of 16 each to meet for one-hour biweekly sessions following the lectures. These groups were eventually combined after the inevitable slight decrease in student participation. At the request of the professor, the program began the third week of the 10 week quarter and terminated during the 9th week; a total of 13 sessions were offered.

The instructor of the Adjunct Course was a Learning Skills Counselor interested in the discipline of history but unfamiliar with the Latin American field. To share the experiences of the students, the counselor attended the lectures and completed the reading.

The structure and content of the academic course dictated the choice of materials and sequence of experiences. The first four meetings were devoted to techniques for preparing for and taking the mid-term examination. The next 6 meetings were spent

on techniques appropriate for new class materials, and the last three focused on preparation for the final. All the strategies taught were ones that counselors in the Center have found to be sound approaches to study.

The initial sessions were spent identifying the key concepts of the course, using the syllabus, models of the first week's lecture notes, and prefaces of the assigned books. Reading strategies were applied to the books assigned prior to the exam, key questions identified, and the ideas from lecture notes and reading organized by means of categorizing devices. Particular emphasis was put on the procedure of analyzing an essay exam question, using previous questions provided by the professor. The class worked with these questions to develop coherent, cohesive, answers. After the mid-term, the test was analyzed, students' answers compared, and new concepts likely to be addressed in the final were projected.

Activities designed to develop general study techniques marked the next phase. These included rapid reading, delayed underlining and note-making, and mapping of material as a means of visualization prior to and after careful reading. Discussion of the appropriate use of these techniques followed. Students' lecture notes were examined to check the use of techniques recommended early in the course. Attention was focused throughout the sessions on identifying key questions and exploring ways of finding answers.

The preparation for the final included activities of gathering, identifying, and organizing significant course content. A portion of the last session was spent on writing an answer to a

sample essay question.

## Methodology

### Description of the Sample

Early in the Winter Quarter, 1977, Dr. Burns presented to his class the idea of the Adjunct Course as an opportunity to improve study skills necessary for success in his course. He hoped these skills would also apply to other social science courses. The counselor then presented the program and its application process, and a description of the random sample selection procedure.

Eighty-two of the class of 145 applied. A group of 36 students were randomly selected and of those, 32 chose to participate in one of the two scheduled groups. (Neither the professor nor the T.A.'s knew which students were participating.) The remaining 46 were assigned to a Control Group for comparison of grade achievement. Both groups, thus, were composed of volunteers with equal motivation to improve their skills.

Seven of the original 32 students attended 3 or fewer sessions, and were dropped from the study. The term Pilot Group applied to the 25 students who attended 4 or more sessions. (Of these, 14 attended 4-9, and 11 attended 10-13.)

Examination of the available data as measured by sex, major, ethnicity, class standing, economically disadvantaged, first year at UCLA, and GPA indicated that there was no significant difference between the Pilot Group and the Control Group. There seemed to be a slight tendency for freshmen and minorities to apply for the program in a greater number than other students.

The characteristics of the Pilot Group were as follows: there was an even distribution of males and females, a large pre-

ponderance of social science majors, a majority of white students, a majority of both sophomores and first year UCLA students, and 7 of the 25 were members of a special economically disadvantaged group. The mean GPA was 2.66.

Data Collection

The original application cards provided names, addresses, phone numbers, and available time schedules. Demographic data of the 32 enrollees was obtained at the first course session. Twenty-four of the 25 students completed anonymous evaluation forms and a questionnaire at the conclusion of the Adjunct Course. The Registrar's office provided official GPA's for both groups. The professor supplied final grades of all 145 students. Nine weeks after the completion of the Adjunct Course a questionnaire was mailed to the 25 Pilot Group members. Nineteen (75%) returned anonymous replies. Finally, social science course grades of Pilot and Control students were obtained for fall, winter, and spring quarters (1976-77).

On the questionnaire administered at the program's conclusion, students were asked to rank 4 reasons for enrolling in the Adjunct Course. Of those responding to the question, 14 (75%) assigned first place rankings to the reasons "to improve study strategies" or "to learn about good study methods." Only 4 ranked "Improve course grade" as a first choice. It is important to note that students' prime objectives for involvement in the Adjunct Course were congruent with the purposes of the program.

Evaluation of Achievement of Program Goals

Goal 1: To improve study strategies

Of the 21 who responded affirmatively to the question, "Be-

cause of this program I now believe I can be a more competent student," 18 (75%) volunteered the information that they had either improved their skills or acquired important skills.

Goal 2: To encourage application of strategies to other social sciences courses

To a question, "Have you used any of the study skills in other courses you have taken this quarter, and, if yes, how useful were they in other classes," 69% replied they were using the strategies with appropriate adaptations in other courses, while 18% were using the strategies as taught. (Total of 87%.)

To the question on the form mailed 9 weeks later, "To the extent that these skills/strategies are appropriate to your current social science courses, how frequently are you using them," the responses were as follows: On a three option rating which moves from Seldom Used (1) to Occasionally Used (2) to Used most of the time (3), the responses were 2.5 or better for the following: those dealing with the organization of the course, careful reading of texts, lecture note-making, the questioning process, and exam answering and writing techniques. Most others were ranked 2 or above.

Goal 3: To increase students' knowledge of themselves as students

This statement produced the following responses. "I have learned some things about myself as I have experienced this Pilot Program." Sixteen of the 24 answered Yes as they commented on an increase in confidence, heightened awareness of areas for improvement, surprise at the cooperative attitude of other students, and comfort at exchanging ideas with other students.

Goal 4: To provide group study experience in which all students share a common course

Evidence for the achievement of this goal in the responses to a questionnaire statement: "Because of this program I can see some advantages in team study." There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the values of team study. Eighteen answered Yes, 9 of them feeling that other points of view stimulated thought, and 4 that team study promoted learning. Six answered No, but several of these commented that they were already aware of the advantages of team study.

Goal 5: To increase student understanding of study strategies

Since there was no Pre-Test and Post-Test, no proof can be shown of an increase in student understanding of strategies. It is believed, however, that the ranking of strategies according to the degree used 9 weeks after the conclusion of the course gives evidence that the majority of the students understood the skills.

## General Evaluation

### Improvement in Academic Achievement

Examination of the final grade achievement of the numbers of the Pilot and Control groups provided the following results:

Table 1

Comparison of Final Class Grades for Pilot and Control Groups

| | Number of Cases | Mean Grade | Standard Deviation | Score | Degree of Freedom | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pilot | 24* | 2.9 | .6 | .92 | 67 | Not significant |
| Control | 45** | 2.7 | 1.0 | | | |

*One student with B+ on mid-term withdrew from the course
**One of the Control Group received an Incomplete

This statistical evidence indicates that any differences between the final course grades of the two groups occurred most

probably by chance fluctuation.

When we examined the grade achievement data of those students who attended 10 or more of the 13 sessions, we found the following:

Table 2

Comparison of Final Course Grades of Those Attending 10 or More Sessions of Adjunct Course with Control Group

| | n | Mean Grade | Standard Deviation | Score | Degree of Freedom | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pilot | 11* | 3.2 | .43 | t=1.68 | 54 | $p < 0.05$ |
| Control | 45 | 2.7 | .94 | | | |

*Includes only those attending 10 or more sessions

This comparison of Pilot and Control group students demonstrates a trend toward higher grade achievement on the part of those Pilot Group students who attended 10 or more sessions.

When we examined, however, the grades earned in social science course in the spring quarter, we were unable to find any significant grade improvement of those in the Pilot Group over the Control Group.

Students' Evaluation of the Program

All of the 19 students responding to the questionnaire mailed in the spring recommended to varying degrees that it be offered again.

## Conclusion

In reviewing the evidence, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Adjunct Course achieved its goals and was useful to students. The benefits of this content related course are demonstrated by the participants' increase in self-confidence, their positive response to the team experience, their continued appli-

cation of strategies nine weeks after completing the course, and the grade achievement of those who attended 10 or more sessions.

The action of the History Department testified to its recognition of the importance of combining study process with course content. Its new discussion section will include the strategies taught in the Adjunct Course plus two areas needing additional attention. Special emphasis was given to ways of developing writing skills and methods of improving time management during the training sessions with the teaching assistant. Thus, insights gained from the Adjunct program will continue to have an effect upon the students of this new program.